

Media release – 24 February 2005

There has recently been some publicity given to work experience programs which take upper secondary school students to work in hospitals for up to one day a week. This has been presented in some areas of the press as if secondary school students are undertaking courses leading to formal nursing qualifications as enrolled or registered nurses. This is not the case.

These programs are in principle not different from school programs involving work experience in hospitality, environment and a range of other occupations. The programs place students in hospital settings, but it may be in the kitchens or the administration, seeing how a hospital works. To the extent that they are in wards, they perform unskilled work under close supervision. Patient care, the essential focus of a hospital's work, is not compromised.

Such programs can be useful in a student's general education. They can also serve as either a recruiting ground or a reality check for students who might think themselves interested in a nursing career after leaving school. They are not a back-door entry to formal nursing courses, admission to which remains the responsibility of TAFE colleges and universities. Some items in the press have given a misleading impression.

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